

20 June 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Mr. Strobe Talbott  
of Time Magazine

1. After clearing it with Mr. Hetu I phoned Strobe Talbott of Time Magazine on several points of accuracy in his article on CIA of 20 June 1977. I first thanked him for a book he had given me on Madame Mao. Then I said that of the three points he had made on China analysis by the Agency two were, in my view, not accurate. The first point was CIA's inability to predict the rise of Hua. I agreed we had not predicted his appointment as Acting Premier in February 1976, but in September 1976 we had said he was the front runner to replace Mao. I said that we had not paid adequate attention to signs of his rise prior to February 1976. We were reexamining this evidence right now as an educational exercise in improving future predictions.

2. On the second point, the vilification of Madame Mao, I said we were much better off. We had said that she was widely disliked in China and that she would not survive Mao by long. I thought our record was good on this one. On point three, the rehabilitation of Teng, I said again we had said early and frequently that he would be coming back. The issues and dynamics of his return were, in my view, well covered.

3. Strobe said he appreciated my comments and he said his source, whom he would not name, was a high ranking official in the White House. I said that most of those officials were not around when our reporting on these three points appeared. He said there was a continuity factor over there at the NSC and then went on that their comments were much less flattering than the comments that actually appeared in Time. He said that were he to do the story again, he would include the fact that CIA faults enumerated were attributable to a White House source and he would have checked his findings with an expert at CIA before reporting them.

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4. The atmosphere was good throughout our talk. Strobe agreed he would not quote me in any way.



STAT

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for China

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